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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3226
INFO RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 6534
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 1690
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1550
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SUBJECT: MECHANICS OF ELECTIONS: ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

REF: ALGIERS 282

¶1. (U) Under the February 28 decree that set in motion the
May 17 legislative election process, four Algerian government
agencies play some role in the preparations. The Ministry of
Finance controls the budget for the elections; the Ministry
of Information is responsible for scheduling free media
access for qualified candidates; the Ministry of Justice
ensures that legal procedures are followed; and the Ministry
of Interior (MOI) has responsibility for securing and
protecting election sites as well as for the logistics of
organizing the elections. Each of these ministries stands up
an adhoc committee to oversee its part of the process. In
the case of MOI, two committees are established. These
ministerial committees ultimately report to the prime
minister.

SLOW AND MESSY LISTS

¶2. (SBU) All four ministries have repeatedly declined to
provide us the names of the officials serving on the
committees.   We also asked MOI, local attorneys and
political parties when the list of registered voters would be
ready for the parties' review, under the assumption that
political parties may wish to challenge some of the data.
According to MOI and the political parties, CD-ROMs
containing complete voter data might be released to the
political parties on or about March 25. Based on a 2003
amendment to the 1997 election law (an amendment sponsored by
the opposition party Islah and adopted by parliament), the
voter data must be given to the head of each qualified
political party within ten days of the publication of the
election decree. Thus, the information should have been made
available this year by March 10. Based on our conversations,
under a best-case scenario the data will be provided to the
political parties one week before the April 1 deadline for
party challenges to the lists.

¶3. (SBU) Islah and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD),
two opposition parties, told us they challenged names of
registered voters in advance of the 2004 presidential
elections. The other political parties said they did not
bother to make any challenges that year. Several parties
said the lists provided in 2004 were distributed one week
prior to the challenge deadline and that the data supplied on
the CD-ROMs were not usable. While MOI provided the data for
every single voter in 2004 by wilaya (province), the ministry
listed the data as a succession of names in no particular
order and in a format not allowing for sorting by gender,
date of birth, election district, or even city. In short,
the data provided amounted to a long string of names that

could not be readily reviewed or challenged. MOI and
political party sources tell us they expect any data provided
this year to be in the same format.

MORE ON THE ISLAH CASE

¶4. (SBU) Hocine Zehouane, an attorney who is also president
of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights, told
us March 10 there was no legal basis for allowing Mohamed
Boulahia to hold an Islah party congress after Djaballah was
denied permission four times (reftel). Khaled Bourayou,
another respected lawyer, concurred. German and Swedish
embassy officials told us that the European Union will not
send election observers to Algeria this year because Algeria
did not make the cut based on available funding. Asked if
their embassies were monitoring the events concerning the
disqualification of Djaballah's faction of the Islah party,
both said they were not. Political officers at the French
embassy, in contrast, are in touch with Djaballah and closely
following events, but the French have no plans to discuss the
matter with the government of Algeria.
DAUGHTON